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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [UG](#)  
SUBJECT: UGANDA: HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS FEAR  
ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL MAY PASS

REF: A. KAMPALA 1271  
[1](#)B. KAMPALA 1276

Classified By: Political Officer Trevor Olson for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The regional representative of the Ford Foundation, the Chairman of Sexual Minorities of Uganda (SMUG), and the leader of a local women's rights association thanked the U.S. for its opposition to Uganda's draft "anti-homosexuality" legislation (ref. A), expressed concern over the security of those opposed to the bill, and alleged that some American religious organizations in Uganda have encouraged the draft legislation. They also warned that without international pressure to defeat the legislation, the "anti-homosexuality" bill stands a chance of becoming law. End Summary.

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Homophobic Legislation Popular in Uganda  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) On November 5, the Ford Foundation's Human Rights and Social Justice Representative for Eastern Africa Dr. Willy Mutunga, Sexual Minorities of Uganda (SMUG) Chairman Frank Mugisha, and Akina Mama Wa Africa (AMWA) Regional Coordinator Christine Gutegwa thanked the Ambassador for the U.S government's public response to the "anti-homosexuality" bill. Dr. Mutunga said the President of the Ford Foundation directed him to share their concerns about the draft legislation with the U.S. Embassy, and noted that both SMUG and AMWA receive Ford Foundation funding. AMWA tracks the progress of anti-homosexual legislation throughout Africa.

[1](#)3. (C) Gutegwa said passage of the "anti-homosexual" bill in some form may be unavoidable due to the popularity of homophobic legislation in Uganda and support from influential government leaders. Although the Ugandan government has yet to articulate a position on the bill, Gutegwa and Mugisha said Ethics Minister Nsaba Buturo and First Lady Janet Museveni both support the bill. They also said President Museveni is well aware of the legislation and believes that its passage will secure the support of key religious constituencies for the February 2011 elections. Gutegwa and Mugisha speculated that Museveni is using the "anti-homosexuality" bill to divert attention away from other issues like electoral reform and corruption. COMMENT: President Museveni was unaware of the "anti-homosexuality" bill during his October 24 meeting with Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson, but said criminalizing homosexuality goes "too far" and is not in Uganda's interest (ref. B). END COMMENT.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The Ambassador said criminalizing homosexuality would constitute a significant step backwards for the protection of human rights in Uganda. Passage of the

"anti-homosexuality" bill would also adversely impact U.S. programs that incidentally support communities targeted by the legislation as well as U.S. funded HIV/AIDS programs. The Ambassador noted that, in addition to our public response to the legislation, the U.S. has already raised these concerns with senior Ugandan government leaders including President Museveni.

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American Religious Influence  
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¶5. (C) Mugisha subsequently told PolOff that some American religious groups are actively supporting the "anti-homosexuality" legislation. He attributed local interest in criminalizing homosexuality to a March 2008 anti-gay "Coming Out Straight" conference organized by Uganda's Family Life Network with financial support from American religious groups including Abiding Truth Ministries and International Healing Ministries. Mugisha said three American speakers at this event were particularly influential and that the conference culminated with the creation of an "anti-gay task force" charged with drafting anti-homosexuality legislation.

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Persecution of Gay and Lesbian Community  
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¶6. (SBU) Gutegwa and Mugisha said they are concerned for the security of local gay and lesbian activists and members of the Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community,

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and asked whether international donors could help ensure their protection. The Ambassador said foreign missions are unable to physically protect individuals targeted by draft or existing legislation, but reaffirmed U.S. commitment to closely follow and speak out about human rights violations. Dr. Mutunga said the Ford Foundation is reviewing potential funding mechanisms for the protection of gay rights defenders in Uganda.

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International Role  
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¶7. (SBU) Mutunga, Gutegwa and Mugisha said supporters of the "anti-homosexuality" legislation may portray international criticism of the bill as "cultural colonialism." They encouraged international donors to stress the legislation's inconsistency with internationally accepted human rights standards, and its potential impact on assistance programs, through behind the scenes diplomacy with members of Parliament and senior government officials. They said that absent international pressure, aspects of the legislation stand a good chance of becoming law.

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Comment: Museveni Will Decide  
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¶8. (C) Comment: A November 11 editorial in Uganda's main opposition newspaper laments that every dispute in Uganda, from massive corruption scandals to the smallest personal problems of National Resistance Movement (NRM) leaders, ultimately winds its way to President Museveni for a decision. The fate of the "anti-homosexuality" bill is likely no different. The bill has wide support in Uganda and could, if passed, shore up support for the NRM and Museveni among religious and social conservatives. It is therefore important for human rights defenders to hold Museveni to his promise to Assistant Secretary Carson to "discourage" the legislation because it goes "too far". While Museveni's response is encouraging, there is as yet no indication that his decision has filtered down to anyone outside of the

presidential conference room. Passage of the legislation, even if its severe punitive measures are not actively enforced, would be a needless and damaging blow to both Uganda's and Museveni's international reputation.

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